

Judah Touro



JUDAH TOURO (1775-1854), was born in Newport, Rhode Island, the son of a local rabbi. During the War for Independence, the Touros left Newport and took refuge in New York City and then in the West Indies. Young Touro, who was educated as a businessman by his uncle, Moses M. Hays, settled in New Orleans and through careful investments in real estate ultimately became very wealthy. Wounded by the British at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815, Judah Touro was rescued by a Christian friend who nursed him back to health. A lifelong bachelor, without any immediate heirs, Touro devoted himself in his latter years to

good deeds. After making generous provisions in his will for his personal friends, Touro bequeathed the remainder of his estate equally between Jewish and Christian institutions. He is the first notable American Jewish philanthropist. Touro is perhaps best remembered for the substantial sum of money he donated to help complete the Bunker Hill monument. It is not so well known that Judah Touro was the first American Jew to leave a large sum of money for the poor Jews of Jerusalem. All of this he did with an unusual degree of modesty, wanting nothing more than to aid his fellow Jews and his fellow Americans.